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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003609

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SUBJECT: IRAQI VICE PRESIDENT AL-HASHEMI REVIEWS
FEDERALISM, SECURITY, OTHER ISSUES WITH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Vice President Tariq Al-Hashemi discussed federalism and constitutional review with the Ambassador on September 25, agreeing on the need for a broad consensus on these and related issues. He was optimistic about efforts being made to improve security in Anbar and Diyala but cautioned that no progress had been made in controlling militias despite promises from Prime Minister Maliki. Al-Hashemi also expressed his general concern that Maliki was sidelining him on key issues. END SUMMARY.

Federalism: Is Tawafuq Prepared?

¶2. (C) Al-Hashemi told the Ambassador that he was familiar with the central points of the agreement reached between bloc leaders in the Council of Representatives (CoR) on September 24 but had not read the actual document. (NOTE: This agreement, to be reported septel, calls for the first reading of a modified version of the region formation law on September 26 and the concurrent naming of the members of a constitutional review committee. END NOTE.) Asked by the Ambassador which version of the region formation law would form the basis for the first reading, Al-Hashemi said he assumed it would be "a compromise of the two or three proposals already submitted." He then spoke by telephone with Tawafuq CoR bloc leader Adnan Al-Dulaimi, who informed him that a modified version of the Shi'a coalition's (UIC's) draft would form the basis for the first reading, but that the UIC had declared its openness to further modifications.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador cautioned Al-Hashemi against allowing an unacceptable version of the region formation bill to pass in the hopes that the constitutional review process would overturn it. Al-Hashemi said he was unhappy with the UIC draft, but that the UIC appeared to have a majority of the votes behind it. However he also noted that the Sadrists were against discussion of federalism at this point, that Fadhila had reservations, and that even Dawa's support for the UIC draft was uncertain. "Dawa tells SCIRI that they support the UIC bill, but Maliki told me that they didn't support it," Al-Hashemi continued. Al-Hashemi agreed with the Ambassador that it was important to form a broad consensus on federalism, as well as to consider the relationship of federalism to other important issues such as oil.

Security: Anbar and Militias

¶4. (C) Describing Anbar as the "key" to the country's security issues, Al-Hashemi expressed optimism that a meeting

scheduled for September 30 would prove an important step in solving the province's security problems. The meeting, he said, would include representatives from the Anbar tribes, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Interior, and MNF-I.

Al-Hashemi noted his concern that Anbar's problems were spreading to Diyala, but said that a recent meeting he had attended with Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim on Diyala had been a positive step. The Ambassador noted that a promising security agreement regarding Diyala had been signed and that the Prime Minister had sent a representative to the province, a fact Al-Hashemi said he was unaware of.

15. (C) Al-Hashemi stated that security had improved in Doura and other neighborhoods targeted to date by the Baghdad Security Plan, and that neighborhood residents were generally supportive of the increased U.S. presence. He expressed grave concern at militia activity, however, and claimed that he had evidence that elements in the Iraqi police were helping the Jaysh Al-Mahdi (JAM) carry out operations in Baghdad. Despite assurances from Prime Minister Maliki that he would deal with the militias, Al-Hashemi continued, little progress had been made to date. For example, Al-Hashemi said, Muqtada Al-Sadr had asked Maliki that MNF-I and government forces not go into Sadr City and had promised to reign in the JAM, but "that was several months ago and he has not delivered."

Concerns About Maliki and Leadership of the INIS

16. (C) Asked by the Ambassador his perspective on Maliki's performance, Al-Hashemi expressed his frustration that Maliki was not reaching out to him. "As soon as he became Prime

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Minister," Al-Hashemi continued, "I offered him my full support, but he hasn't taken me up on that offer. He says the right things, but he is not acting neutrally, not taking the time to sit down and talk about issues with us." Noting that Maliki had "come a long way," the Ambassador emphasized U.S. support for Maliki's efforts and observed that Maliki was under pressure from several sides, a point with which Al-Hashemi readily agreed.

17. (C) In response to a query from the Ambassador, Al-Hashemi said that Maliki was not happy with Mohammed Shehwani, the director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS). One of the Prime Minister's key advisors had informed Al-Hashemi of Maliki's dissatisfaction earlier in the day, Al-Hashemi said, and he had already entertained several phone calls from potential candidates for the job. Al-Hashemi said it was essential that the replacement be a Sunni, as other key intelligence positions were held by Shi'a or Kurds.

Comment

18. (C) Al-Hashemi seemed less informed than his fellow Vice President, Adel Abdel Mehdi, on the legislative maneuverings related to the regions law and constitutional review (Abdel Mehdi meeting to be reported septel). In contrast to Al-Hashemi, Abdel Mehdi had a copy of the September 24 agreement, knew what version of the region formation law the bloc leaders had agreed to read on September 26, and seemed to have thought more strategically about voting math and possible compromises. To the extent that Al-Hashemi and Abdel Mehdi are representative of Tawafuq and the UIC (or at least SCIRI/Badr), respectively, Tawafuq may be missing opportunities that more savvy parliamentary leaders would have realized. END COMMENT

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